purely as a matter of speculation and were selling them at higher prices. He requested that the matter should be looked into.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

14. Hardships caused to the people by certain proceedings of the Forest Department.

Mr. Padmanabhan Parameswaran (Member, Pathanapuram taluk) said that his first point was about the delay in the issue of free passes for the removal of junglewood trees &c., from registered lands. At present the owner had first to fell and stack the timber and get a certificate from the Proverticar to the effect that the trees stood on a registered land. With the certificate, the owner had to make an application to the Divisional Forest Officer for a free pass. The application would very likely sleep in the Divisional Office, if the owner did not himself follow it and get it forwarded to the Range Officer for verification and report. His next turn was to wait on the Range Officer and take him to the land and get a list prepared of the trees or other articles sought to be removed. The Range Officer forwarded his report, together with the list, to the Divisional Officer. To obtain the pass without further delay, the owner or his man would have to visit the Divisional Forest Officer again, and he would then get a pass, if no further reference be thought necessary by that officer. By that time several months would have elapsed and the timber or other articles would have to lie during the long interval at the place at the owner's risk. The owners might not get the passes at all if they did not actually interest themselves by following their applications from office to office. It was regrettable that no attempt was made by the superior officers to scrutinise the number of such applications pending in the several Range and Divisional Offices and to enforce the prompt issue of the passes. In British India, no such passes were insisted on, and rightly ; because it was obviously the duty of the Government, through their Forest officials, to take care of their forests and see that no timber or other produce was fraudulently removed therefrom. Instead of doing so, the *onus* of proving that the articles removed were removed from one's registered land was unjustly shifted to the owner's shoulders. He therefore prayed that the system of passes should be done away with, and, if that could not be done, the power of granting them should be vested in the Range Officer. If the fear was that the Ranger might collude with the applicant and cause loss to the Government, the Member thought that the Ranger had greater facility to do so under the existing arrangement, taking refuge under the Divisional Forest Officer, on whom lay the entire responsibility.

[The Conservator of Forests explained to the Member that the delay was, in most cases, due to the circumstance that the owners failed to keep the boundaries of their lands clear. Even the Proverticar was unable to identify the boundaries in some cases.]

The Member said, in reply, that the lands were, in some cases, registered without the applicants seeing them. It was the duty of the Land Revenue Department to demarcate the land on the ground before preparing the *olugu*. That was never done. He suggested that, at least in the case of new registries, the applicants should be required to demarcate the land on the ground and then apply for registry. Under the above circumstances, the owners could not be held responsible for the existing state of affairs.

Dewan.—I think that it is necessary to insist on the Revenue Department demarcating the lands on the ground before registering them.

The Member went on to say that a time-limit should be prescribed for the issue of free passes and the power of granting them given to the Range Officer.

The second point urged by the Member was that there were extensive swampy areas within reserved forests, which were quite unfit for forest purposes and which were admirably suitable for cultivation. The department would not register such areas owing to a vague fear that injury might be caused to the adjoining forests, if those

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areas were brought under registry. Instances were not wanting of European Planters entering forest reserves, clearing large areas and planting them. Far from prosecuting them, the lands were thrown out of the reserve and registered to them. There was no justification for such partial treatment. Many natives worked on such estates as coolies, and if no harm could result to the forests from them, the Member failed to see why any injury should be feared at the hands of the few ryots who might occupy such swamps, if registered. He therefore prayed that swampy lands within forests should be assigned to the natives of the country for cultivation.

The Member lastly protested against the procedure of the department in engaging contractors for the removal of Royal trees standing on registered lands. When the owners took care of the trees, it would be but bare justice to allow them to pay the half-value due to the Government and fell the trees for their use when they wanted them. At present, the contractors removed them and the owners had to go to distant depots to satisfy their small requirements.

Dewan's reply.— Noted. In the matter of the alleged delay in granting passes for the removal of timber from private lands, in the Pathanapuram taluk, the Peishkar of the Division will enquire into, and report, in consultation with the Conservator of Forests, what the reasons are for the delay, if any, and how it could be obviated.

The Assembly adjourned at 5-15 P. M.

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